



[National Association of State Park Directors](#)

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America's State Parks to Host First Day Hikes

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Looking for an invigorating way to kick off the New Year? Ring in 2014 with a First Day Hike January 1 in a state park near you! All 50 states are participating in the third annual event that invites families and friends to celebrate the New Year amid the sights, sounds and wonder of our natural world with fun, guided hikes.

"Last year, First Day Hikes hosted 22,000 people, who covered nearly 44,000 miles in 700 state parks all across the country," said Priscilla Geigis, president of the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD). "These family-friendly outings provide a great chance to get outside and experience the beauty of our parks, stay fit and build lasting traditions with loved ones."

On a First Day Hike visitors enjoy exciting one- to two- mile journeys through diverse, beautiful natural areas, led by park rangers and volunteers. Many hikes include additional activities such as campfires, s'mores, crafts, costume contests and storytelling.

America's State Parks and American Hiking Society are teaming up to promote First Day Hikes as a healthy and memorable way to start the New Year.

"Winter hiking is a fun and wonderful experience, but does require all hikers to be properly prepared," noted Gregory Miller, president of American Hiking Society. "We are encouraging Americans young and old to ring in the New Year by putting on their hiking boots and joining First Day Hikes in support of state parks and trails in 2014."

America's State Parks boast a variety of beautiful settings for year-round outdoor recreation, and each First Day Hike will offer an opportunity to explore unique natural and cultural treasures close to home. Featured hikes nationwide include a candlelight walk during Alaska's darkest time of year, a horseback ride along Indiana's Tippecanoe River, an interpretive trek along the magnificent longleaf pine forest at Florida's Alfred B. Maclay Gardens, a guided exploration of the wide open desert hills of West Texas, and a sunrise tour of Hawaii's sweeping ocean views.

"America's State Parks is committed to connecting people with some of the most important natural and historical features in their region," said Lewis Ledford, executive director of NASPD. "These hikes are also a reminder of the value of state parks to the well-being of children. Getting kids outside and unplugged from their electronics promotes their physical and mental health and inspires stewardship of our natural world for future generations."

First Day Hikes originated more than 20 years ago at the Blue Hills Reservation — a state park in Milton, Massachusetts. Details about the more than 700 hike locations, including difficulty and length, program themes, terrain and starting times are listed on most state park system websites.

The [National Association of State Park Directors](#) promotes and advocates for the state park systems across America in providing for conservation and management of natural and cultural resources, quality outdoor recreation experiences, connecting children and families to nature and the outdoors, and more. With more than 7,000 park areas and visitation that exceeds 720 million annually, the economic impact to local communities is estimated to exceed \$20 billion each year. America's State Parks is an alliance of state park systems in all 50 states.

For helpful cold weather hiking tips, visit the American Hiking Society's website at americanhiking.org/cold-weather-hiking.

All participants are encouraged to log their First Day Hike adventures on social media with **#firstdayhikes**.

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*Promoting and advancing the state park systems
of America for their own significance, as well
as for their important contributions to the
nation's environment, heritage, health and
economy.*